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GUILTY PLEA ENTERED IN DEATH OF D.C. POLICE OFFICER

GREENBELT, Maryland - Thomas M. DiBiagio, United States Attorney for the District of Maryland, announced that Michael Smalls, age 40, a lawyer with the Veterans Administration, pled guilty today to one count of involuntary manslaughter and related misdemeanors in the April 16, 2003 death of District of Columbia Police Detective Eugene Lonon. In addition, Smalls, of District Heights, pled guilty to drunk driving and another traffic offense in an unrelated incident that occurred in the same general area on January 27, 2003. At the time he was killed in the fiery crash, Detective Lonon was off-duty, stopped at a traffic light on Suitland Parkway at Naylor Road.

In a statement of facts provided to the court as part of the plea agreement, Smalls admitted that his blood alcohol level was .23-- nearly three times the legal limit when he struck Det. Lonon's stopped car at about 5:40 a.m. To reach that blood-alcohol level, Smalls would have had to consume at least 15 to 16 ordinary alcoholic drinks, according to a toxicology expert. U.S. Park Police estimated that Smalls was traveling at least 78 miles per hour as he approached the red light in the posted 45 mile-per-hour zone. Det. Lonon's car, with his body inside, struck a second vehicle causing that vehicle to catch fire. Det. Lonon's neck was broken in the initial collision. The driver

of the second vehicle managed to get out before her car exploded.

Smalls faces a maximum penalty of 6 years imprisonment, a \$250,000 fine and 3 years of supervised release as to the manslaughter charge. Smalls also pled guilty to the misdemeanor offenses of driving under the influence of alcohol and speeding, each carrying a maximum penalty of 6 months in prison and a fine of \$5,000. Under the terms of the plea agreement, Smalls agreed to 5 years imprisonment. District Court Judge Richard D. Bennett scheduled a hearing for November 25, 2003 at 11:00 a.m. Smalls is to remain on home detention pending sentencing.

According to the statement of facts, Smalls agreed that his blood-alcohol level was .19 at the time of his earlier January 27, 2003 arrest for drunk driving on Suitland Parkway near Silver Hill Road. The U.S. Park Police were looking for Small's car that night after receiving reports from motorists that he had almost caused several accidents. Smalls was apprehended while driving well under the posted speed limit, interfering with other traffic and weaving. Each offense carries a maximum penalty of 6 months incarceration and a \$5,000 fine.

At the time Det. Lonon was killed on April 16, Smalls was awaiting his initial appearance in the U.S. District Court on the January 27 arrest.

The case is a result of an investigation by the U.S. Park Police. The case was prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney Hollis R. Weisman.